

Profiles in Cardiology

This section edited by J. Willis Hurst, M.D., and W. Bruce Fye, M.D., M.A.

Henry J. L. Marriott: Lucid Teacher of Electrocardiography

CHARLES B. UPSHAW, JR., M.D., MARK E. SILVERMAN, M.D.

Department of Medicine, Emory University School of Medicine and The Fuqua Heart Center of Piedmont Hospital, Atlanta, Georgia, USA

“Cherchez le P.”

Henry J. L. Marriott, M.D.

Henry Joseph Llewellyn Marriott (Fig. 1), a cardiologist widely admired for his inductive ability to analyze complex arrhythmias and teach others how to follow in his path, was born in Bermuda on June 10, 1917. His father, Henry Marriott, Archdeacon of Bermuda (Church of England), immediately nicknamed him “Barney” because he was born on the eve of a day set aside to honor St. Barnabas, a Christian missionary of the first century. This nickname stuck, and he has been known to his many friends as “Barney.” His mother was Helen Mary Arton; her family had lived in Bermuda for over 200 years and included many physicians.

After early schooling in Bermuda, he traveled to England at age 13 to attend Haileybury College (1930–1936) where he excelled scholastically and athletically, playing squash, cricket, tennis, and rugby football. From 1936 to 1942, he attended Brasenose College of Oxford University, where he was a Rhodes Scholar and played cricket and squash. He received the B.A. degree (1939), the M.A. degree (1942), and the B.M., B.Ch. degree in 1943 (equivalent to the M.D. degree). In 1944, he became House Physician at St. Mary’s Hospital in London where he worked under George Pickering in general medicine

and Alexander Fleming (both later “Sir”) in the Penicillin Research Unit. He took care of some of the early patients who were successfully treated with penicillin for the hitherto fatal bacterial endocarditis. He recalls that German buzz bombs were a frequent distraction because the hospital was located near Paddington Railway Station.

Marriott returned to Bermuda in 1945 as Senior Resident at King Edward VII Memorial Hospital and trained on the obstetrical, medical, and surgical services. In 1946, he moved to Baltimore, Maryland, for a Fellowship on the Allergy Service at Johns Hopkins Hospital. In 1947, he transferred to the University of Maryland for additional training and then stayed on the faculty.

In the late 1940s, he was asked to teach electrocardiography to the fourth year medical students; he recalls with amusement that he had heard the students talking among themselves about Q waves while he was not then sure what a Q wave was nor why it was important! But he accepted the task with relish, spent much of the next few days in the library, and produced the first of a series of mimeographed outlines which soon became the basis of the first edition of *Practical Electrocardiography* published in 1954. This text, which brought simplicity and fun to learning electrocardiography through the use of pithy phrases, became enormously popular with physicians, students, and nurses. Examples of his phrases include: “Cherchez le P.” . . . “Who’s married to whom?” . . . “Milk the QRS.” . . . “The haystack principle” . . . “The Harold Bix Rule” . . . “You cannot tell a pacemaker by the company she doesn’t keep.” . . . “A-V dissociation, like jaundice, is a symptom, not a diagnosis.” . . . “Learn to recognize Wenckebach by his footprints rather than his face.” . . . “All that’s bigeminal isn’t extrasystolic.” . . . “The commonest cause of an unexplained pause is a nonconducted PAC.” . . . “All that’s anomalous isn’t ectopic.” The book continued to reach wide audiences through eight subsequent editions over the next 34 years and is still found on many bookshelves.^{1–3}

Address for reprints:

Charles B. Upshaw, JR., M.D.
90 Forrest Lake Drive, NW
Atlanta, GA 30327, USA
e-mail: marksil@comcast.net

Received: April 27, 2006

Accepted with revision: May 25, 2006

Published online in Wiley InterScience
(www.interscience.wiley.com).

DOI:10.1002/clc.6

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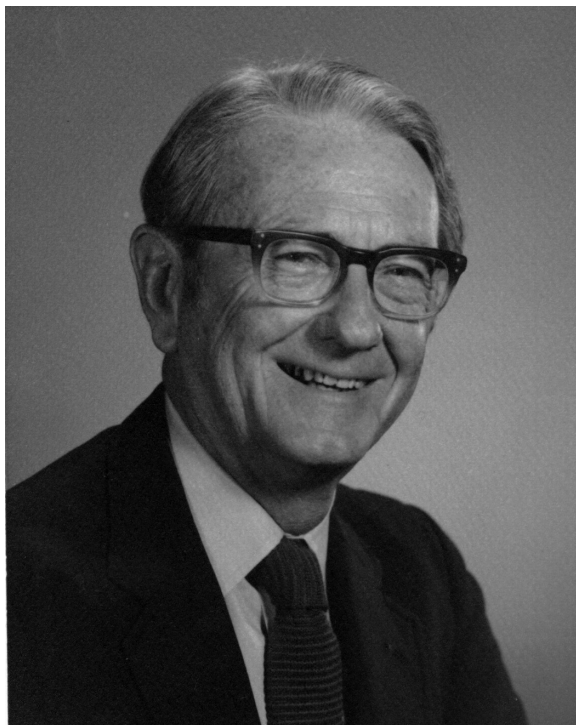


FIG. 1 Henry J. L. Marriott, M.D.

Desiring a milder climate than Baltimore, more like his native Bermuda, he became Director of Education and Cardiology at Tampa General Hospital in Florida in 1962. While there, he published a correspondence course in electrocardiography which he called "Tampa Tracings." In 1965, he became Clinical Director of the Rogers Heart Foundation of St. Petersburg, Florida, where he remained for 30 years. In 1968, 6 years after the first coronary care unit (CCU) was established in Kansas City and elsewhere, he became Director of the Coronary Care Unit at St. Anthony's Hospital in St. Petersburg, a position he held for the next 11 years. This new experience influenced his direction, for he quickly realized the importance of well-educated CCU nurses for the optimum care of acutely ill cardiac patients. He encouraged and educated CCU nurses in his hospital and elsewhere to reach their maximum potential. Over the next 15 years, he held more than 100 workshops for CCU nurses around the country, lecturing for three consecutive days at each workshop, and famously dancing with as many nurses as possible at the social occasions. The American College of Cardiovascular Nurses (ACCN) was organized by Dr. Jonni Cooper in 1990, and he has been an enthusiastic supporter of this organization.

He became known throughout the world as the most lucid and entertaining teacher of electrocardiography, lecturing throughout the U.S., at the yearly meetings of the American Heart Association and the American College of Cardiology where a crowd would press around to listen, and in more than 20 countries in five continents. After attending his sessions on heart block, aberration, or the tachycardias, delivered with his characteristic clarity of expression, the attendees would feel that they had mastered the subject. For many years, he hosted a yearly course for physicians, including other outstanding speakers, in international places that attracted a devoted audience. He became a visiting Clinical Professor of Medicine at Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta, at the University of South Florida in Tampa, and at the University of Florida in Gainesville where he analyzed tough, unknown arrhythmias in front of faculty, residents, and cardiac fellows. He was always receptive to interpreting difficult arrhythmias that were sent to him from around the country and continues to do so in his retirement in Tampa, Florida.

Over the years, he has authored 17 books, 140 medical articles, four correspondence courses and two book chapters.^{2,3} He has dedicated the last five editions of *Practical Electrocardiography* "To Jeannine—who left me" . . . "To Gladys—who came back". . . To his three daughters, "Tudie, Bunto, and Tertia—a true and treasured trio." "To Jonni, who 'sat like patience on a monument smiling'—and shaping unsubmissive pages!" and . . . "To Thello, Plato, Kristi and Cato—the most diverting quartet."¹

Truly an international resource, Barney Marriott is appreciated for his special contributions to the understanding of complex arrhythmias as well as for lectures that were delivered with humor, style, and memorable, punchy lines.

Acknowledgment

The authors thank the librarians of the Sauls Memorial Library of Piedmont Hospital for their help.

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